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The MTAS Library: Tennessee's Resource Center on Municipal Government

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The MTAS Library: Tennessee's Resource Center on Municipal Government



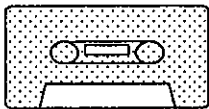
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by Carol C. Hewlett

Senior Information Resource Consultant

The MTAS Library Collection

The library of the University of Tennessee Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) began in 1952, and we have a few historical documents and reports dating back that far. Our emphasis, however, is on more current materials. The collection, in a variety of formats, embraces all departments and functions of municipal government. So, while our subject area is focused, we amass a wide range of materials within that topic. The collection includes books, reports, pamphlets, com-



puter disks, videotapes, audiotapes, on-line databases, and soon compact disks. We even file sample

door hangers used by cities to alert residents to new refuse collection schedules, recycling procedures, rate changes, and other notices.

Legal resources of the MTAS library are popular items. We have a sizeable collection of sample ordinances from across the country, plus individual Tennessee municipal codes. From this legal collection,

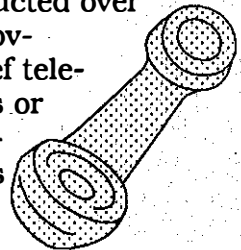
we can provide you with sample laws of other cities regulating anything from animals to zoning. In recent years we've added titles to the law collection, putting at our fingertips more state and federal laws and court opinions pertinent to city government. While the library staff is not trained to interpret the legalese often included in these

documents, there's usually an MTAS attorney handy who can.

One of our most frequent requests is for sample descriptions of municipal personnel positions. Over the years, we have collected hundreds and always are on the

lookout for new ones. For example, when a city requested sample position descriptions for a municipal park ranger, we had none on hand. So we turned to the Parks and Recreation Technical Advisory Service, which sent us applicable descriptions that we forwarded to the requesting city and added to our files. Now, we're ready for the next Tennessee city needing a park ranger position description!

Other resources of the MTAS library include sample budget documents, employee and community newsletters, personnel manuals, fire and police manuals, information on successful festivals and celebrations, records management manuals, equipment specifications, purchasing procedures, impact fees and utility rate schedules, and the results of hundreds of telephone surveys we have conducted over the years on all aspects of city government. In fact, conducting brief telephone surveys -- calling 10 cities or less -- to gather specific information for Tennessee city officials is one of our most popular services. These surveys, like the rest of the collection, cover all aspects of municipal government.



The MTAS Library:

Link to Other Resource Centers

In addition to a clearinghouse for information about and of interest to Tennessee city government officials, the MTAS library can be likened to a transfer station. While we try to collect all the information we think you or our consultants might need, even we don't have every resource available on municipal government. But we never let anyone go away empty-handed. If we can't answer your questions using

(continued overleaf)

MTAS staff and resources, we'll track down the information for you from other sources.

MTAS has an associate or agency membership in many of the same professional associations to which you or a city colleague might belong. These include the Government Finance Officers Association, National Institute of Municipal Law Officers, International City Management Association, National League of Cities, Public Risk and Insurance Management Association, International Personnel Management Association, and American Public Works Association. We receive the newsletters and major journals published by these and other associations and any Tennessee state chapters, and purchase many of their other publications. Also, we call on them at times when we lack the resources in-house to answer your questions.

In addition to collecting the regular publications of the Tennessee Municipal League, the MTAS library receives many of the magazines, newspapers, and reports generated by municipal leagues in other states. These publications are good resources to

identify trends or issues not yet well-documented in Tennessee. For instance, when Tennessee cities first looked years ago for facts on regulating video game arcades, we found through California's league publication that some cities there already had ordinances in place to regulate these businesses.

The MTAS library also subscribes to a national network and database that links local governments to share information, contacts, and experience. We have used this electronic network often for Tennessee city officials and anticipate such a resource always will be available.

How to Access the MTAS Library

Access the MTAS library by telephone, mail, a visit to our Knoxville office, or through one of our MTAS field consultants

that drops by your city hall. The best way is the way you find easiest and most responsive. We encourage you to use our consultants -- it takes little effort from you and they often know of other helpful resources in addition to our library.

The Future

Future resources at the MTAS library likely will include access to databases developed in-house, increased access to commercial databases, direct on-line access at your city hall to MTAS library holdings, organized branch office libraries in middle and west Tennessee, and increased resource sharing between the MTAS library and the others across the state.

We welcome publications of individual Tennessee cities to add to our collection. In fact, many of our library users want to know how other Tennessee cities have addressed an issue or problem they face. So next time you look proudly at your city's newest publication or report, develop a policy on a tricky personnel problem, or draft an ordinance regulating a new issue for your city, don't forget to ship a copy to the MTAS library. It might generate some good press for your city and help a colleague at the same time.

We want to serve you better. If you have questions or suggestions regarding the MTAS library collection or services, call or write us. Better yet, pay us a visit.

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